



Early Journal Content on JSTOR, Free to Anyone in the World

This article is one of nearly 500,000 scholarly works digitized and made freely available to everyone in the world by JSTOR.

Known as the Early Journal Content, this set of works include research articles, news, letters, and other writings published in more than 200 of the oldest leading academic journals. The works date from the mid-seventeenth to the early twentieth centuries.

We encourage people to read and share the Early Journal Content openly and to tell others that this resource exists. People may post this content online or redistribute in any way for non-commercial purposes.

Read more about Early Journal Content at <http://about.jstor.org/participate-jstor/individuals/early-journal-content>.

JSTOR is a digital library of academic journals, books, and primary source objects. JSTOR helps people discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content through a powerful research and teaching platform, and preserves this content for future generations. JSTOR is part of ITHAKA, a not-for-profit organization that also includes Ithaka S+R and Portico. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

THE DICTATING MACHINE IN THE SCHOOLS

HOWARD F. TAYLOR

Shortridge High School, Indianapolis, Indiana

The dictating machine¹ is the most improved type of phonograph used for recording and reproducing the spoken word. Its principal use is to enable the business man to dictate to the machine at any time or place or speed, and have it typewritten at a later time without the use of stenography. Its use in business offices has forced our schools to instal the machine in order to give proper training to the pupils of the commercial department.

It also removes a great burden from the typewriting teacher, since one dictation can be used by a number of pupils at different times, and at varying speed. By use of a multiple hearing device, ten, or sometimes thirty, pupils can take the same dictation at the same time, and reproduce it on the typewriter.

Why not increase our efficiency by using this machine in our language department, when the commercial students are not using it? It seems to be of most value in a Latin class, because of the limited vocabulary needed there. The ordinary phonograph, however, has long been used in the teaching of modern languages. The present article rests upon experience in the Latin class alone.

The most important use in the Latin class is in vocabulary, inflections, and grammar. The record prepared by speaking into a tube in an ordinary tone can be heard by the entire class when a large flaring horn is attached by a rubber joint. This same record is afterward repeated to slow or absent pupils, or new pupils, either individually or in groups, with a single, or multiple, hearing device.

By inclosing the machine in a tight box with only the hearing tube protruding, experiments are now being made to enable pupils to study with it in the back of the room while others are reciting in the room.

¹ Otherwise known as the dictaphone.

One cylinder will easily contain all the regular noun and adjective declensions, another the entire synopsis of a verb, with meanings, another a long vocabulary review of a hundred words, another a dozen grammatical rules or examples, frequently repeated. The capacity is eight to twelve minutes of speech. By use of the measuring device any desired part of a cylinder may be used.

In advance study of vocabularies our machine speaks the words repeatedly in groups of two, tells the pupil to write them while it dictates, asks him questions, gives him needed explanations, asks him to say or spell them with or without the machine, and lastly, when several groups have been dictated, gives him a review drill on them. He is encouraged to answer each question before the machine answers it. This method brings almost 100 per cent efficiency in writing six new words given to beginners in eight minutes.

Rules and examples of constructions are repeated again and again by the machine and by the pupils, alternating or uniting with the machine. It takes no longer to teach rules than to hear a recitation upon them assigned for outside study. The association of the rule with a certain tone used by the machine leaves an indelible impression not obtained by the natural voice. The dull pupil and the bright, indifferent boy shine most brilliantly in this work.

The other principal use of the dictating machine is to record the entire explanation of the grammar and forms and spelling of all the words in all the sentences of occasional very important exercises. The pupils who need such help are then required to correct their work outside of the class hour by listening to the machine. How many teachers have fervently wished that, by explaining an exercise once, all the pupils, including the absentees, could have an opportunity to know every step and the reason for it and the spelling of every word! The machine does it.

Other uses add to enjoyment and profit. Any visitor in town after school hours, or in vacation, may leave a speech for the class. A prominent professor, whose elementary book is used by the pupils, prepared a talk in this way for the Shortridge High School Latin pupils, recently. Experts in various lines may give pupils or

teachers direct instruction in their particular fields. They merely have to go to the nearest office where there is a dictating machine, and send the record to the teacher. Latin songs have been recorded by pupils, and outsiders, and taught at any time without the use of a musical instrument.

The mathematics teacher may give a drill in formulas or propositions; the English or history teacher, some essential facts; the elementary teacher, a spelling or arithmetic drill at definite and gradually increasing speeds.

What are the advantages of all this over the teacher's saying the forms with the class?

The first advantage is that the voluntary attention is much better. Second, the teacher may move about the class and see that each pupil is doing exactly what the machine is telling him to do. This is much more effective than when the teacher's mind is busy with speaking. Third, the absent pupil is reached without extra effort and the slow pupil at no expense except his own time. Fourth, the teacher may prepare the record in privacy and may stop to think as often as he wishes, and no delay will appear on the record. Fifth, a reliable pupil may prepare many of the records and thereby relieve the teacher. Sixth, while the teacher is correcting work at the board or at the seats, or marking attendance records, others can be learning with the machine. Seventh, the auditory impression and the visual impression are both obtained at the same time, and the tone of the word is as unchanging on the machine as is the written word on the page. Lastly, it relieves the strain upon the teacher's voice and attention, and indirectly on his nerves, and adds to general efficiency.

The problem of physical and educational measurements, obtained with a machine, presents another phase of its use not within the scope of this article.